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AUTHOR Robson, Barbara
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ABSTRACT

A survey of the status of language usage in Malawi begins with an overview of the distribution and usage of English (the official language) and the native Bantu languages: Chichewa or Nyanja (Chinyanja), the language used by half the population; and three other Bantu languages also used there--Lomwe, Yao, and Tumbuka. The social situation favoring Chichewa/Nyanja's development, the prestige of English and its use for all official purposes, and the instability of language policy are described. A matrix follows that rates these five languages on: (1) their usage rating using State Department classifications; (2) increase and decrease trends by the year 2000; (3) chief of state use in addressing the populace; (4) use in armed forces, government, court, and diplomatic communications, written and oral; (5) use as a language of instruction or required language in higher education, on the secondary and elementary levels, and in adult education; (6) use in the popular press, radio and television broadcasting, and film; (7) business and professional use, written and oral; (8) use in intellectual circles; (9) the alphabet situation; (10) the status of indigenous literature; (11) use in public signs and notices; and (12) the availability of instructional materials and dictionaries in the native languages for use in English as a second language. Explanatory notes give the number and population percentages using the languages, the type of alphabet used, and specific instructional materials titles. A selected bibliography is also included. (MSE)

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COUNTRY STATUS REPORT:

MALAWI

September 1984

Prepared by:

Barbara Robson

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The official language of Malawi is English. The national language is Chichewa (called Nyanja everywhere but Malawi), which is also one of the major languages in neighboring Mozambique. In Malawi, native speakers of Chichewa constitute about half of the population. There are about a dozen other languages spoken natively in Malawi; of them Lomwe, Yao and Tumbuka are spoken by more than a half-million each.

All writers agree that the different ethnic groups in Malawi interact with a minimum of tension; there has been relatively little ethnic conflict. The languages spoken by the different groups are all Bantu languages, and quite similar to one another. It is apparently easy for a speaker of one of the languages to pick up a working knowledge of any of the others. Literacy in Chichewa transfers easily to the other languages as well.

The social situation therefore favors the development of Chichewa as the national language, even though it is not spoken natively in the northern part of the country. Chichewa/Nyanja has become, from historical circumstances, a lingua franca in the area around Lake Nyasa. Chichewa's development in Malawi is being enhanced by continuing attention to standardization and grammatical study; there is a real consciousness of "correct" Chichewa among Malawian intellectuals, and an enthusiasm for its use.

Despite the status of Chichewa, English is held in great esteem by the Malawians, counter to other newly-independent African countries which view the colonial language with disfavor. English is firmly established as the language in which anything official is done: members of Parliament must pass an English test; army recruits must have an elementary school certificate, the examination for which is in English; President Banda addresses the populace only in English, although Chichewa is his native language and he corrects his interpreters in its use.

The use of English for all official purposes is at odds with the availability of opportunities to learn it. Adult education is in Chichewa except for a few correspondence courses. Relatively few Malawi children reach upper primary school, where English language study begins, and becomes the medium of education. Even fewer Malawians get to secondary school, where English is the sole medium of instruction. Government policy with regard to financing of education (education is not compulsory; primary and secondary students must pay tuition; government expenditure for schools is very low) will perpetuate this state of affairs. In 1967, 5% of the population had "some knowledge" of English; it is not likely that this figure has improved significantly since then, or will improve in the future.

Language and education policy are firmly in the hands of octogenarian Life President Banda, as are all other government policies. Writers suggest that Banda is taking less interest in the affairs of Malawi as he ages, and that the country is "on hold" until he either retires or dies. At that time, the political situation in Malawi will probably change dramatically. The broad outlines of language policy will most likely remain the same, with English and Chichewa the official and national languages respectively, but day-to-day aspects of language policy might be altered.

MALAWI

Languages

	Chichewa	English	Lomwe	Yao	Tumbuka
1. Usage rating*	1	2	3	3	4
2. Increase/decrease	2	-	2	2	2
3. Chief of State use?	0	1	0	0	0
4. Armed Forces/written	0	1	0	0	0
5. Armed Forces/oral	0	1	0	0	0
6. Government/written	0	1	0	0	0
7. Government/oral, national	0	1	0	0	0
8. Government/oral, local	1	0	0	0	0
9. Court/written	0	1	0	0	0
10. Court/oral	3	1	3	3	3
11. Diplomatic use?	0	1	0	0	0
12. Higher education	0	1	0	0	0
13. Higher ed: required?	0	1	0	0	0
14. Secondary education	0	1	0	0	0
15. Secondary: required?	0	1	0	0	0
16. Primary education	1	1	0	0	0
17. Primary: required?	1	1	0	0	0
18. Adult education	2	0	0	0	0
19. Popular press use	2	2	0	0	0
20. Transmission across borders?	0	1	0	0	0
21. Use in radio broadcasting	2	2	0	0	0
22. Use in TV broadcasting	-	-	-	-	-
23. Use in film	1	1	0	0	0
24. Business/professional/written	0	1	0	0	0
25. Business/professional/oral	2	2	3	3	3
26. Use in intellectual circles	0	1	0	0	0
27. Alphabet situation*	1	-	2	2	2
28. Status of literature	2	0	0	0	0
29. Use in signs?	1	1	0	0	0
30. Teaching materials*	1	-	0	0	2
31. Bilingual dictionaries*	2	-	0	2	2

Notes:

Numbers are explained on following pages

? = information unavailable within time frame of project

- = not applicable

* = footnotes on following pages

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FOOTNOTES

1. 1983 ESTIMATES, NUMBERS OF NATIVE SPEAKERS

<u>Language</u>	<u>Number of native speakers</u>	<u>Percentage of population</u>
Chichewa	3,413,600	50.2%
English	-	(5%)
Lomwe	986,000	14.5%
Yao	938,000	13.8%
Tumbuka	618,000	9.1%

27. TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

<u>Language</u>	<u>Alphabet</u>
Chichewa	Roman
English	Roman
Lomwe	Roman
Yao	Roman
Tumbuka	Roman

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

<u>Language</u>	<u>Texts</u>
Chichewa	Scotton, Carc', and John Gregory. <u>Learning Chichewa. Books One and Two.</u> (Peace Corps Language Handbook Series). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, African Studies Center, 1980.
	Stevick, E.W. and Linda Hollander. <u>Chinyanja Basic Course.</u> Washington, D.C.: Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, 1973.
	Lilongwe Learning Centre. <u>Chichewa Intensive Course.</u> Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1969.
Tumbuka	Cooper, P. V. and Oliver Rice. <u>Tumbuka Basic Course.</u> Washington, D.C.: English Language Services, 1965.

31. DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

<u>Language</u>	<u>Text</u>
Chichewa	Christian Literature Association in Malawi. <u>The Student's English-Chichewa Dictionary.</u> Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi, 1972.
	Price, Thomas. <u>Short English-Nyanja Vocabulary.</u> Lusaka: NECZAM, 1974.

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<u>Language</u>	<u>Texts</u>
Chichewa	Zambesi Industrial Mission. <u>English-Chinyanja Dictionary</u> . Blantyre: Zambesi Industrial Mission Press, 1956.
Tumbuka	Catholic Mission. <u>Chitumbuka-English, English-Chitumbuka: Some Common Useful Words</u> . Mzambazi White Fathers' Mission, 1957. Turner, William V. <u>Tumbuka-Tonga-English Dictionary</u> . Blantyre: The Hetherwick Press, 1952.
Yao	Sanderson, G. M. <u>A Dictionary of the Yao Language</u> . Zomba: The Government Printer, 1954.

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - a

1. Usage rating, using the State Department classifications
 - 1: Official language, most widely used.
 - 2: Official language, not most widely used.
 - 3: Widely used language, but not official. (Over 10% of population)
 - 4: Unofficial language used by significant minority (but less than 3)
 - 5: Unofficial language used by influential minorityFOOTNOTE: NUMBERS OF SPEAKERS, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION
2. Increase/decrease trends by the year 2000
 - 1: Number of native speakers will increase in proportion
 - 2: Number of native speakers will remain proportionally constant
 - 3: Number of native speakers will decrease in proportion
3. Chief of State use, in addressing populace: YES (1) NO (0)
4. Armed Forces written communications
 - 1: Only language used in official communiques
 - 2: One of the languages used in official communiques
 - 0: Not used in official communiques
5. Armed Forces oral communications
 - 1: Used on all levels
 - 2: Used among officers only
 - 3: Used among multi-lingual NCO's and troops
 - 4: Used among monolingual troops only
 - 0: Not used
6. Written government communications
 - 1: Only language used in official communications
 - 2: One of the languages used in official communications
 - 0: Not used in official communications
7. Oral government communications/national level
 - 1: Official language spoken in national assembly
 - 2: One of the official languages spoken in national assembly
 - 0: Not used in government
8. Oral government communications/local level
 - 1: Official language in local government
 - 2: One of the official languages used in local government
 - 3: Allowed in local government proceedings, translated into official language
 - 0: Not used in local government
9. Court use in written communications
 - 1: Only language used in official communications
 - 2: One of the languages used in official communications
 - 0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - b

10. Court use in oral communications
 - 1: Only official language used in court
 - 2: One of the official languages used in court
 - 3: Allowed in courts, translated into official language(s)
 - 0: Not used in courts
11. Diplomatic use in notes to other countries: YES (1) NO (0)
12. Use in higher education
 - 1: Official medium of instruction
 - 2: Unofficial medium of instruction
 - 0: Not used
13. Language taught as subject in required courses in higher education:
YES (1) NO (0)
14. Use in secondary education
 - 1: Official medium of instruction
 - 2: Unofficial medium of instruction
 - 0: Not used as medium of instruction
15. Language taught as subject in required courses on secondary level?
YES (1) NO (0)
16. Use in primary education
 - 1: Official medium of instruction
 - 2: Unofficial medium of instruction
 - 0: Not used as medium of instruction
17. Language taught as subject in required courses on primary level?
YES (1) NO (0)
18. Language use in adult education
 - 1: Used in oral and written technical instruction
 - 2: Used in oral and written life skills instruction
 - 3: Used in oral life skills instruction
 - 4: Used in literacy classes only
 - 0: Not used in adult informal education
19. Language use in popular press
 - 1: Used in publications throughout country
 - 2: Used in centrally-based publications with national distribution
 - 3: Used only in regional and local publications
 - 4: Used in clandestine publications only
 - 0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - c

20. Language used in radio/TV transmission across national borders?
YES (1) NO (0)
21. Language use in radio broadcasting
1: Language used broadcasting throughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national broadcasts
3: Language used in local broadcasting only
3: Language used in clandestine broadcasting only
0: Language not used in radio broadcasting
22. Language use in TV broadcasting
1: Language used in telecasting throughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national telecasting
3: Language used regional and local telecasting only
0: Language not used in TV
23. Language use in film
1: Language used in indigenous film-making
2: Foreign-language films dubbed/subtitled into language
0: Language not used in films
24. Business/Professional use - written
1: Sole official language in business and professional communications
2: One of the official languages in business and professional communication
0: Not used
25. Business/Professional use - oral
1: Used in trade and commerce throughout country
2: Used in national trade and commerce only
3: Used only in local trade and commerce
26. Language use in intellectual circles
1: Language used in indigenous scholarly publications
2: Language used in formal scholarly discussion
0: Language not used
27. Alphabet situation
1: Established standardized alphabet exists.
2: Alphabet developed, no standardization
3: Competing alphabets exist
0: No alphabet exists
FOOTNOTE: TYPE OF ALPHABET USED
28. Status of indigenous literature
1: Established written tradition exists
2: Literature tradition emerging
3: Popular literature exists
0: No written literature exists
29. Language used in official public signs, notices: YES (1) NO (0)

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - d

30. Teaching materials for English speakers
1: Wide range of teaching materials exists
2: Narrow range of teaching materials exists
0: No teaching materials exist
FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
31. Dictionaries for English speakers
1: Wide range of bilingual dictionaries exists
2: Narrow range of dictionaries exists
0: No dictionaries exist
FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY